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## Keep Food and Water Safe After a Disaster or Emergency

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Food may not be safe to eat during and after an emergency. Safe water for drinking, cooking, and personal hygiene includes bottled, boiled, or treated water. Your state, local, or tribal health department can make specific recommendations for boiling or treating water in your area.

### Food

**Note: Do not use your fireplace for cooking until the chimney has been inspected for cracks and damage. Sparks may escape into your attic through an undetected crack and start a fire.**

Identify and throw away food that may not be safe to eat.

- Throw away food that may have come in contact with flood or storm water.
- Throw away food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.
- Throw away perishable foods (including meat, poultry, fish, eggs and leftovers) that have been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit (F) for 2 hours or more.
- Thawed food that contains ice crystals or is 40 degrees F or below can be refrozen or cooked.
- Throw away canned foods that are bulging, opened, or damaged.
- Food containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles), twist caps, flip tops, snap-open, and home canned foods should be discarded if they have come into contact with floodwater because they cannot be disinfected.
- If cans have come in contact with floodwater or storm water, remove the labels, wash the cans, and dip them in a solution of 1 cup of bleach in 5 gallons of water. Re-label the cans with a marker. Include the expiration date.
- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, wash your hands, make ice, or make baby formula.



### Store food safely

- While the power is out, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- Add block ice or dry ice to your refrigerator if the electricity is expected to be off longer than 4 hours. Wear heavy gloves when handling ice.

### Feeding infants and young children

- Breastfed infants should continue breastfeeding. For formula-fed infants, use ready-to-feed formula if possible. If using ready-to-feed formula is not possible, it is best to use



bottled water to prepare powdered or concentrated formula. If bottled water is not available, use boiled water. Use treated water to prepare formula only if you do not have bottled or boiled water.

- If you prepare formula with boiled water, let the formula cool sufficiently before giving it to an infant.
- Clean feeding bottles and nipples with bottled, boiled, or treated water before each use.
- Wash your hands before preparing formula and before feeding an infant. You can use alcohol-based hand sanitizer for washing your hands if the water supply is limited

## Clean and sanitize food-contact surfaces.

CDC recommends discarding wooden cutting boards, baby bottle nipples, and pacifiers . These items cannot be properly sanitized if they have come into contact with contaminated flood waters. Clean and sanitize food-contact surfaces in a four-step process:

1. Wash with soap and warm, clean water.
2. Rinse with clean water.
3. Sanitize by immersing for 1 minute in a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach (5.25%, unscented) per gallon of clean water.
4. Allow to air dry.

## Related Resources

- **USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline: 1-888-MPHotline.**  
(Available questions and concerns about food safety)
- USDA Alert: Keeping Food Safe During Flooding and Power Outages  
(USDA Food Safety Information related to Hurricane Katrina)
- Keeping Food Safe in an Emergency, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
(General fact sheet and FAQs on food and water safety including guidance on when to discard perishable foods)
- Consumer Advice: Disaster Assistance with Food from Foodsafety.gov  
(Provides resources on food safety related to fires, floods, hurricanes, power outages)
- Food Safety Office, CDC  
(Comprehensive food safety information)
- Sanitation and Hygiene  
(Tips to help protect yourself from illness and disease)
- Food and Water Safety and Hand Hygiene Resources  
(Easy-to-use posters, stickers, flyers, and PSAs with tips and information)